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Dennis H. Kelly, Esq., read the following account of an artificial island, and certain antiquities recently discovered near Strokestown, County Roscommon :—

“ About a mile to the west of Strokestown, in the County Roscommon, is *Cluam Fhaoië* (Cloonfree), the royal residence of the Kings of Connaught, of which frequent mention is made in the Annals of the Four Masters. Of this once royal residence, the sole present remains are, a square, or rather oblong fort, about ninety paces by seventy, with a deep single fosse, covered over with tangled brushwood. Immediately to the south of the ancient palace, at a distance of about 500 yards, is the extremity of the lake of *Cloonfree*, and nearly joining on to it that of *Cloonfinlough*, whilst about a mile further on, *Ardekillan* completes the chain; and it is the artificial islands in these lakes, but especially that in *Cloonfinlough*, that form the proper subject of this paper, and any one wishing to more completely identify the locality can easily do so by referring to Sheets 28, 29 Ordnance Survey, County Roscommon. Each of these lakes has one of these islands in it; that in *Cloonfree* is situated just opposite to the site of the ancient palace, on the mainland; that at *Cloonfinlough*, just opposite to the ruins of a small church, on the mainland, and that at *Ardekillan* in similar proximity to a ruined church, on the mainland. The one with which we are more immediately concerned is that in Cloonfinlough, *Cluam Fionn-loë*, “the enclosure of the white lake,” a designation which it well merits, overlying, as it does, a stratum of very white shell marl.

“ The operations of the drainage works now going on under the Board of Works, in the vicinity of Strokestown, have greatly lowered the level of the water in all these lakes, and last summer laid bare the artificial islet of Cloonfinlough, exposing the nature of its structure, and a considerable deposit of bones adjoining it, amongst which have been found a large number of very miscellaneous antiquities.

“ The dimensions of the island are about 130 feet diameter ;

it is constructed on oak piles (many of them showing the action of fire), driven into the soft marl, at regular distances, and tied together by horizontal oak stretchers, so as to form a triple stockade round it, with an interval of about five feet between each stockade. Outside of this, to the north-westward, are a number of irregularly placed piles, stretching a short distance from the islet, and it was adjoining to them the great deposit of bones was found. The centre of these stockades was laid with trunks of smallish oak trees, placed flat on the marl, and all pointing to a common centre, thus forming a platform whereon the island itself was constructed. When it was first observed, there was, jutting out from the island to the lake, towards the west, a kind of jetty or pier, formed of a double row of piles and stretchers running parallel, about eight feet asunder, and on which logs of timber were closely laid horizontally.

“Of this gangway, and of the stockades, there are now but very imperfect remains, so much has been broken up and removed by the peasantry.

“The deposit of bones, &c., close to this island, consisted of bones of cattle, deer, horses, swine, sheep, fowl, dogs, deer, both fallow and red, a few specimens (in general much broken) of the horns of the Irish elk, and one or two specimens of human remains, and amongst them a quantity of articles of a most miscellaneous description, some of apparently very great antiquity, and others of a much more recent date. Amongst these are spear-heads, bronze pins, some of exquisite workmanship, and scarcely any two of exactly the same form. A brass bowl, hammered out of the solid; two brass vessels, made of small pieces, most curiously rivetted together; a brooch of handsome workmanship; a variety of bone pins and implements; deer horn-combs, of very great artistic merit; horn discs, like backgammon men; knives, hooks, and hatchets of iron; swords and spear-heads; an iron implement, like what a baker uses for putting his loaves in the oven, made of sheet iron, cu-

riously rivetted together, and having in the centre a circular ornament, with a cross in it, that has evidently once had an arabesque pattern on it; sundry miniature frying-pans, and a small whetstone; single and double bronze rings; one coin of the Emperor Hadrian; one bulla, Pope Paul V.; sundry silver coins, most of them Edwards, and one so late as James, 1690, and one silver coin, unfigured in any collection that I have seen.

“Between the island and the ruined church were found two canoes, hollowed out of single oak trees, but neither of them much more than two feet wide; the stern of one of them was perforated with numerous auger holes, about one inch each in diameter.

“On examining the structure of the island itself, which was effected by cutting a trench 20 feet long by 5 wide, as near the centre as possible, there was found, at about eight inches under the surface, which was covered with rank grass growing in a rich mould, a very close-laid pavement of irregular-sized boulder stones. When this was removed, a stratum of black earth was exposed, with occasional fragments of bones through it of swine, fowl, sheep, cattle, and deer; and about six inches beneath this, a considerable layer of burned earth, with several inches of unburned clay under it. Then came a second very closely-laid pavement of large-sized, flat-surfaced stones, beneath which were alternate layers of black earth and burned clay and marl, reaching down to the log platform, and interspersed, like the one above it, with occasional bones and fragments of bones; some few human remains, viz., one skull, and portions of some more were got on the exterior edge. No coffin-stone, chest, or other sepulchral remains.

“Amongst the bones found were some heads of oxen of the purest short-horn breed, precisely similar to those found at Dunshaughlin.

“The only structures of this description brought under public notice previously have been the stockade at Dunshaughlin, mentioned by Dr. Wilde, and one at Lough Fea in the County

Monaghan, very cursorily alluded to by Mr. Shirley in his publication; but W. T. Mulvaneey, Esq., Commissioner of Public Works, informs me he has heard of two others in lakes in Cavan and Leitrim, laid bare by drainage, and for the particulars of which he has very politely written.

“It is remarkable, that the forms of the stockades at Dunshaughlin and Cloonfinlough are perfectly similar, that both were situate in lakes, and exposed by drainage operations; that opposite Cloonfinlough on the main land is a ruined church; opposite Dunshaughlin, a ruined structure; that near both canoes were found, and that the pins and other antiquarian remains, as well as the heads of oxen found, are precisely identical.

“It is thus, I think, quite manifest, that these islands are artificially constructed, and that originally they were inaccessible, except by boats, whilst from the circumstances of these boats being hollowed out of single trees, and some of them of very considerable size, the conclusion follows that they were constructed at a very remote period, when the art of boat-building was comparatively unknown, and ere the primeval forests had vanished from our soil; and this supposition would be strengthened by many of the pins and bronze ornaments found, whilst the horns of the Irish elk, long extinct, would similarly point to a very remote date. But along with these are also found other matters of much more recent date, and which would lead to quite a different conclusion.

“Amongst these latter articles are knives, *some of which have failed in the forging*; *combs in an incomplete state of manufacture*; deer-horns *sawn in sunder*, and shavings as if *left after a turner*. From these I am led to think, that whatever may have been its original occupants, in later times the little island resounded to the busy hum of industry, and that the smith, the brazier, the comb-maker, and the turner, there drove a brisk trade, and sometimes solaced their leisure in the construction of pretty toys, like the tiny plate-bucket in the possession of the post-mistress of Strokestown, and whose neatness of finish

would do no discredit to our best modern cabinet-makers. It is turned in oak, and hooped with brass, four and a half inches high, and four inches diameter. There were originally a pair, but one was unfortunately broken.

“The purpose for which such a structure may have been made is altogether matter of conjecture, as no reference to such is made in any of our annals. Some have thought that they were places of sepulture, and the bones those of the victims offered at the entombment of some powerful chief; but a friend has suggested that such could not be the case: first, because that at such a ceremony, the custom was an holocaust, in which the animals would be consumed *en masse*; and, secondly, he knows of no instance of wild animals, like deer, captured in the chase, being so offered; but he then suggests, that these islands, inaccessible when the boats were secured, might not have been unacceptable retreats to the instruments of feudal tyranny, or to petty chieftains who lived by border robbery; and that, in the course of years, the bones thrown over the side by the little garrison might have accumulated to the extent of what have been found; and the pins and other articles of that date found along with them may well have been dropped in the carelessness of such vagrant life, whilst the rough culinary arrangements of former days might account for the burned earth. But it is a curious matter if such were the case, and I am inclined to deem it not far from the fact, that, amongst the numerous pins found, scarce any two are critically alike.

“He then goes on to suggest that, in later times, the island that had afforded a fastness to predatory chiefs might have become the residence of the artisan; and, combining the fact of the proximity of the ruined church, that such artisans might well have united the clerical and laical characters, and been monks, labouring at the smithy, the turning-lathe, or the foundry; and that this would account for the bones, horn, and iron articles of more recent date. The horn discs discovered may have

been the draught-men with which the brethren amused themselves at a game of chequers, and we all know this was a favourite game amongst the ancient Irish. In the *Caoine Clanna Uí Fhac*, one of our most ancient tales, the beautiful *Deirpopi* is represented as engaged in a game of chequers with her lover, when their residence is treacherously assailed by the myrmidons of O'Connor. And in the *leabair na gceap*, the right of the chief of Siol Murry, and of the King of Chach, are stated to be certain chess-boards. Moreover, the brethren, on this supposition, may well have eked out their artistic earnings by their accustomed questing, and thus the coins of various dates are accounted for.

“Another friend, with more ingenuity than probability, has suggested that this island, where manifestly was a smithy, was the retreat of the smith who, in early ages of Irish history, was looked on as associated with magic rites, possessed of the evil eye, and shunned as an associate; and to this, St. Patrick’s hymn at Tarah gives some countenance, where he mentions *Smiths* and *Druids* as those whose incantations he deprecates; but I own I look on this suggestion as very fanciful.

“The double pavement is again a difficulty; but here the suggestion of Mr. Mulvaney, Commissioner of the Board of Works (and whose extended acquaintance with drainage operations entitles any suggestion of his to the greatest weight) affords a solution. He says, he has no doubt that the levels of our inland lakes have frequently been suddenly and considerably raised by stoppages in the outfalls and accidental obstructions, like the falling in of a bank, or the accumulation of floating timber; and, supposing such to have occurred at Cloonfinlough, and nearly submerged the island, rapaciously occupied, it might have been raised afresh, and the new pavement laid for the convenience of its more peaceful occupants.

“The other two islands in Ardekillan and Cloonfree have not yet been examined. All that is really known of them is, that an external stockade is apparent round them, like

that at Cloonfinlough. Near the former, Ardekillan, was found a boat forty feet in length, and four feet across the bow hollowed out of a single oak! and in which were a skull, a bronze pin, and a spear, which, by the liberality of Mr. R. Kelly, I am permitted to present to the Academy. The skull is perforated in the forehead, and has the mark of no less than twenty sword-cuts on it, showing the murderous conflict in which its owner must have been engaged; and near to it were found a neck-piece of iron, and twenty feet of rude chain attached, that would do credit to the dungeons of Naples, and by which its unhappy victim was made fast. These, which I believe are perfectly unique, Mr. R. Kelly has also permitted me to present to the Museum; and they certainly do not afford any very exaggerated idea of the humanity of our Milesian ancestors.

“In conclusion, I would venture to suggest to the Academy to have the other stockaded islands systematically examined in the ensuing summer, and by parties capable of doing far more justice to the subject than so unexperienced an antiquarian as the author of the present paper.”

Robert Ball, LL.D., remarked that the discovery of bones of the Irish elk, in the locality described by Mr. Kelly, was not conclusive evidence that the other bones and the antiquities found with them were contemporary with the period of that animal in Ireland.

George Petrie, LL.D., made some remarks on ancient crannog islands, and on the iron articles discovered in those at Dunshaughlin and Cloonfree.

The Earl of Enniskillen made some remarks in relation to crannog islands, and read the following memorandum, which had been given to him by the Rev. William Smyth Burnside, with certain antiquities described therein, which he presented